



Food Code Implementation Guidance from the
Washington State Department of Health
Environmental Public Health Division
Food Safety Program



Food Code References:

3-501.11
4-205.10
4-1
4-2



Definitions: Equipment

FSRC Issue Number: 2011-01



Issue Approved by the Food Safety Review Council: December 2011



Freezers

Question

Do all freezers used in retail food establishments need to be certified by an ANSI-accredited certification program?

Answer

No. Freezers must simply meet the applicable construction and performance criteria in the Code.

The confusion comes from reading 4-205.10, in which the Code states that equipment certified by an ANSI-accredited certification program automatically complies with the Code's equipment construction standards. However, the Code does not require such equipment. Non-certified freezers (including some domestic models) can also be approved in some food establishments under some conditions if they meet certain construction and performance criteria.

Criteria

To approve non-certified units, the Food Code requires freezers to:

- Keep foods frozen (3-501.11).
- Be safe, durable, easily cleanable, corrosive-resistant, etc. (4-101.11).
- Have smooth surfaces and joints, free of cracks, etc. (4-202.11).
- Meet all other applicable standards in Parts 4-1 and 4-2.

Other criteria to consider before approving a non-certified freezer include:

- Frequency of use (domestic models may not be designed to withstand frequent opening and closing).
- Inaccessibility to customers.
- History of satisfactory performance in an existing establishment.
- Capacity.

Examples of food establishments most likely to meet criteria that would allow for a non-certified freezer include:

- Bed and breakfast operations.
- Donated food distributing organizations.
- Preschools.
- Smaller seafood and meat markets.

Failure to Perform

If an approved freezer fails to meet any of these criteria, it must be repaired or replaced.

Public Health Significance

Freezers that are not easily cleanable may lead to cross contamination of foods by pathogens or allergens.

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